



Testimony of Larry J. Wagenaar
Executive Director
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Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 521 and SB 522.

My name is Larry Wagenaar, and I am the Executive Director of the Historical Society of Michigan, the oldest cultural organization in the state. We were founded in 1828 by territorial governor Lewis Cass and explorer Henry Schoolcraft. Unlike the state's Michigan Historical Center, which is the subject of the bills under consideration today, we do not collect things. The Historical Society of Michigan focuses on publications such as *Michigan History* magazine, educational programs like Michigan History Day, awards and recognition opportunities such as the Centennial Farm program, conferences that gather the public together to explore our state's history, and support for the hundreds of local historical organizations statewide.

On behalf of our Board of Trustees and our thousands of members and subscribers statewide, I am here to strongly endorse both the Michigan Historical Center and Michigan Historical Commission bills, Senate bills 522 and 521, under consideration today.

Prior to 1913, the Historical Society of Michigan held the collections of the state of Michigan. In that year, those collections were shifted to what is now called the Michigan Historical Center, now a vital part of the DNR. Over the years the collections at the Center

have grown phenomenally, as its staff works diligently to document our state's heritage. As another historical organization that is dedicated to promoting the stories of our state, we are *so proud of the outstanding work the Center has done and is doing to preserve and share the stories its collections tell. All Michigan's citizens and many beyond our borders know the fabric of our state's heritage through the Center's work.*

In the same way, the Michigan Historical Commission has evolved over the last century to be a helpful advisory body for the Center, especially its focus in assisting the Department with the Michigan Historical Markers program. I am honored to represent the Historical Society of Michigan on the Commission.

Both the Michigan Historical Center and the Michigan Historical Commission bills under consideration today do a wonderful job in "cleaning up" a variety of bills and revisions that have been made through legislation and actual practice over the past 100 years. We fully support the effort to put in place these well-crafted and concise bills that properly reflect all these changes – and set the stage for an effective future.

The Historical Society of Michigan strongly supports the adoption and passage of Senate Bills 521 and 522.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.